

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF
THE TORRANCE WATER COMMISSION**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance Water Commission convened in a regular session at 7:02 p.m. on Wednesday, April 23, 2014 in the West Annex Meeting Room at Torrance City Hall.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present: Commissioners Craft, Kawai, Leone, Marshall*,
McGee, and Chairperson Nishinaga.

Absent: Commissioner See.

Also Present: Public Works Director Beste, Senior Administrative Analyst
Schaich, Senior Water Services Supervisor Berndt, and
Metropolitan Water District Director Lefevre.

MOTION: Commissioner Kawai moved to grant Commissioner Marshall an excused absence for the April 23, 2014 Commission meeting. Commissioner Craft seconded the motion; a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval.

MOTION: Commissioner Leone moved to grant Commissioner See an excused absence for the April 23, 2014 Commission meeting. Commissioner McGee seconded the motion; a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval.

*Commissioner Marshall arrived at 7:10 p.m.

3. FLAG SALUTE

Commissioner Craft led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. AFFIDAVIT OF POSTING

Commissioner Kawai moved to accept and file the report of the City Clerk on the posting of the agenda for this meeting. Commissioner Craft seconded the motion; a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

5A. MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 26, 2014

MOTION: Commissioner McGee moved to approve the February 26, 2014 Water Commission meeting minutes as presented. Commissioner Craft seconded the motion; a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Commissioner See).

6. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM PUBLIC

None.

7. OLD BUSINESS

None.

8. NEW BUSINESS

8A. PRESENTATION OF TORRANCE MUNICIPAL WATER CONVERSION TO AN AUTOMATED METER READING SYSTEM (AMR)

Senior Water Services Supervisor Berndt introduced the item and welcomed Andy Bohn, Regional Manager of Southern California, Neptune Technology Group, and Chris Eisel with Equarius Water Works, distributor covering the state of California. He provided background and stated that Torrance Municipal Water (TMW) looked at several competitors and found that Neptune offered the best product for its needs.

Mr. Bohn provided a PowerPoint presentation on TMW's conversion to an Automated Meter Reading (AMR) system throughout its entire service area. He noted that almost the entire TMW inventory of approximately 26,000 meters has been successfully converted to the new AMR reading program. He reported that the AMR system automates the collection of water use consumption and historical data from meter reading devices by digital radio transmission for billing and consumption analysis purposes. He discussed advantages of AMR compared to traditional meter reading practices that include: improved meter reading accuracy, tremendous gains in operational efficiency, enhanced customer service, significant labor savings, reduced risk of employee injury, and detection of intermittent or continuous leaks. He showed diagrams of the main components of the T-10 water meter base and AMR and noted that the registers have the capability to look at the rate of water flow on a 15-minute basis.

In response to Commissioner Craft's inquiry, he stated that the meter does not show water pressure but that they may be able to add on this feature in the future.

When Commissioner Marshall inquired about battery life, Mr. Bohn explained that the battery is used only for radio transmission and that stored energy controls actual movement of the chamber.

Chairperson Nishinaga questioned why water usage is billed in whole cubic feet and he explained that no water utilities bill in fractions even though they measure in fractions.

Mr. Bohn described potential next steps that include daily meter readings and alarms. He showed photographs of gateway collectors that have the ability to capture data from all meters without having to go out and read them. He explained the Black Box alternative that is a radio receiver that can be placed on street sweepers to collect data.

Commissioner Marshall inquired about privacy issues and Senior Administrative Analyst Schaich explained that the City owns the data and specific authorization is required to release it.

Senior Water Services Supervisor Berndt reported on the application of AMR in the TMW service area. He noted that the conversion started in April 2013 with the large commercial meters and then moved forward with the entire system. He stated that approximately 22,000 meter register retrofits and 2,000 meter change-outs were completed entirely with in-house labor at a cost of approximately \$2.7 million. He noted that all meters can now be read remotely by drive by vehicle and that time saved is allowing staff to spend more time on customer service and inquiries. With the aid of photographs, he described new meter installation, interrogating registers on site, and uploading data to a computer, and analyzing data. He showed videos demonstrating manual reading that requires lifting meter and vault covers to obtain meter reads as well as AMR reading that allows 130 meters to be read per minute. He noted that the biggest challenge is determining how to drive the routes.

Responding to Commissioner Leone's inquiry, Mr. Bohn stated that cities of Newport Beach, Malibu, Lancaster, and Beverly Hills have converted to AMR.

Commissioner McGee inquired about recycled water and received clarification that they are separate but the same type of meter.

Senior Water Services Supervisor Berndt concluded his presentation with AMR program benefits: improved meter reading accuracy; less meter verification re-reads; reduced service callbacks; major reduction in meter reading time; provides analytical information to detect leaks at customer property and resolve high usage inquiries; significant labor savings, and facilitates possible future conversion to monthly billing. He added that during the conversion over 500 boxes were identified that will need to be replaced.

9. METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT DIRECTOR'S REPORT

MWD Director Lefevre distributed newspaper articles and an April 18, 2014 General Manager's News Release. He reported that this week MWD approved rate increases of an overall one and a half percent for 2015 and 2016, the smallest increase since 2004. He stated that TMW currently pays \$890 per acre-foot for Tier 1 full service treated water and this amount will increase to \$923 in 2015 and \$942 in 2016.

Public Works Director Beste stated that TMW customers may see a 2% rate increase based on water costs. He pointed out that water from Well #9 costs \$375 per acre-foot, and this amount includes electricity, treatment, and replenishment assessment costs. He stated that 80% of Torrance's water comes from MWD, noting the City could save significant amounts of money over the years in water costs by pumping the majority of its water locally or by leasing water beyond its water rights. He stated that Well #9 has only been operational for three to four years and has already paid for itself. He noted that having more local water supply facilities also protects the City when there are droughts.

Staff discussed plans and funding opportunities for the expansion of the Goldsworthy Desalter Project that will double its capacity and is expected to provide approximately 20% of TMW's potable water requirements. It was noted that the local IRWMP committee has awarded \$4 million in grant funds for the project.

MWD Director Lefevre reported that a new Chairperson will be elected at the May 13, 2014 MWD Board meeting to fill the vacancy left by the passing of Jack Foley. He provided information about three of the candidates and stated that the person elected will finish the term and two additional years.

He stated that MWD recently settled a significant lawsuit for \$5 billion concerning perchlorate pollution in the Colorado River. He informed Commissioners that California Department of Water Resources announced that State Water Project supplies this year from Northern California will be five percent of a full allocation, the lowest allocation in history. He noted that MWD has agreed that it will not draw on this water in order to help areas in Northern California that are in desperate need of water.

MWD Director Lefevre distributed and reviewed Reservoir Conditions as of April 22 and a Statewide Summary of Snow Water Content as of April 23. He stated that the snowpack for the Colorado River is 101% of normal and is expected to be full for the remainder of the water year.

Brief discussions centered on agreements regarding water levels in Lake Powell and Lake Mead, minimal incidental take of the Delta Smelt, water bonds currently going through the Legislature, drought in Las Vegas, and the Four River runoff in Northern California.

10. WEST BASIN WATER ASSOCIATION REPORT

Public Works Director Beste reported that at the last West Basin Water Association meeting the Water Master presented current snowpack conditions and the Water Replenishment District discussed the completion of the design of the Goldsworthy Desalter plant expansion. He reported that MWD discussed its \$5 million outreach campaign to conserve water.

In response to Commissioner Marshall's inquiry about Tesoro, he explained that it appears that they are concerned that raising water levels by storing water in the Basins would activate their contamination plumes. He provided information about San Diego's lawsuit with MWD, noting that it would be going to appellate court and not be settled for a long time.

11. MONTHLY DEPARTMENT REPORT

Senior Water Services Supervisor Berndt noted that the Monthly Department Report for April 2014 was included in agenda packets. He called attention to the Water Production Summary Table and reported six water main breaks in March compared to five for the same period last year. He stated that the Goldsworthy Desalter experienced a recent shutdown due to the failure of two pump motors and is expected to return to service on April 25.

12. ORALS

12A. Commissioners expressed appreciation to staff for the March 31 tour of facilities and Commissioner Kawaii circulated pictures that he took.

12B. Chairperson Nishinaga stated that he is looking forward to the MWD inspection tour to the Colorado River on May 31-June 1 and expressed concern about levee breaches in the event of a major earthquake.

12C. Senior Administrative Analyst Schaich announced that Torrance Home Depot is sponsoring a California native plant sale event on May 3.

12D. Senior Water Services Supervisor Berndt stated that the Water Quality Report is available on the website and that staff would present the report at the May or June Commission meeting.

13. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At 9:35 p.m., Commissioner Craft moved to adjourn the meeting to Wednesday, May 28, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. in the West Annex Commission meeting room. Commissioner Leone seconded the motion and, hearing no objection, Chairperson Nishinaga so ordered.

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Approved as amended October 22, 2014 s/ Rebecca Poirier, City Clerk
